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### The Camera and Man

Jean Rouch

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## The Camera and Man

## THE CAMERA AND MAN

JEAN ROUCH

In 1948, when André Leroi-Gourhan organized the first ethnographic film congress at the Musée de l'Homme, he asked himself, "Does the ethnographic film actually exist?" He could only respond, "It exists, since we project it" (Leroi-Gourhan 1948).

And in 1962, Luc de Heusch quite justly wrote:

To brandish the concept of the "sociological film," isolating it within immense world production, is this not a chimerical and academic exercise? The very notion of sociology is fluid, varying by country and local tradition. The term does not apply itself to the same research in Russia, the United States, or Europe. Is it not, on the other hand, the helpless mania of our time to catalogue, to cut up into arbitrary categories, the mixture of confused ideas, of moral values, and aesthetic research on which these artists, who are the creators of films, feed with such extraordinary avidity [de Heusch 1962].

These two statements take on a particular value in 1973. It derives, on the one hand, from the shameful situation in which anthropologists (and increasingly sociologists, too) find their discipline, and on the other, from the unwillingness of filmmakers to face up to their creative responsibilities. Ethnographic film has never been so contested, and the authored film has never been so questioned. And yet, year after year, the number and quality of ethnographic films continues to grow.

It is not my concern here to pursue polemic, but simply to state the paradox: the more these films are attacked from the exterior or the interior (i.e., by the actors and viewers or by the directors and researchers), the more they seem to develop and affirm themselves. It is as if their total marginality was a way of escaping the reassuring orbit of all the daring attempts of today.

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For example: Since 1969, when ethnographers were compared (rather skillfully) to "salesmen of black culture," and sociologists to "indirect exploiters of the working class" by angry delegates at the Montreal African Studies Association meetings, or the Pan African Festival in Algiers, there have never been so many enrollments of new students in university departments of sociology and anthropology.

For example: Since young anthropological filmmakers declared that films on rituals and traditional life were out of date, there have never been so many films depicting primitive cultures, and so few on the problems of development.

For example: Since the creation of film collectives, there have never been so many authored films in cinema and human sciences, and, simultaneously, so much decadence on the part of filmmakers participating in these collectives.

In short, if ethnographic film is attacked, it is because it is in good health, and because, from now on, the camera has found its place among man.

## 100 YEARS OF FILMS OF MAN

### *The Pioneers*

The arduous route that brought us here began in 1872, when Edward Muybridge made the first chronophotograph in San Francisco in order to settle an argument over the manner in which horses trot. Muybridge was able to reconstruct movement by decomposing it with a series of still images, which is to say, to "cinematograph" it.

From the beginning, after animals and horses it was man: the horseman or horsewoman (nude for reasons of muscular observation), the walker, the crawler, the athlete, or Muybridge himself—all with their hair blowing in the wind, twirling about in front of 30 automatic still cameras. In those furtive images, American West Coast society 100 years ago exposed more of itself than any Western could. They were horsemen of course, but white, violent, muscular, harmoniously impudent, ready to give the world the virus of good will, and, as a bonus, the "American way of life."

Twelve years later, in 1888, when Marey used Edison's new pliable film and enclosed Muybridge's apparatus in his "chronophotographic rifle," it was again man who was the target. And in 1895, 40 years before Marcel Mauss would write his unforgettable essay "Les Techniques du Corps," Doctor Felix Regnault, a young anthropologist, decided to use chronophotography for a comparative study of human behavior, including "ways of walking, squatting, and climbing" of a Peul, a Wolof, a Diola, or a Madagascan.

In 1900, Regnault and his colleague Azouley (who was the first to use Edison cylinders for recording sound) conceived the first audiovisual museum of man: "Ethnographic museums must contain chronophotographs. It is not enough to have a loom, a wheel, a spear. One must know the way they operate, and the only way to know this precisely is by means of the chronophotograph." Alas, some 70 years later, such an ethnographic museum of films and recordings is still a dream.

After the appearance of the animated image with the cinema of Lumiere, it was still man who was the principal subject.

Film archives of this century began with naive films. Was the cinema going to be an objective instrument capable of capturing

the life and behavior of man? The marvellous ingenuity of Lumiere's "Sortie des Usines" ("Leaving the Factory"), "Déjeuner de Bébé" ("Baby's Lunch"), and "Pêche à la Crevette" ("Shrimp Fishing") permitted one to believe that it could [de Huesch 1962].

But from the beginning, the camera was equally revealed to be a "thief of reflections." Perhaps those workers hardly paid attention to Lumiere's little cranking box as they left the factory. But some days later, upon seeing the projection of the brief images, they suddenly became conscious of an unknown magical ritual—that old fear of the fatal meeting with one's double.

Then, "the illusionists" came along, and "uprooted this new type of microscope from scholars and turned it into a toy" (de Huesch 1962). And so, film viewers preferred Melies' trick optical version of the eruption of the Pelée Mountain volcano to the terrifying documents that Lumiere's crews brought back from the China wars.

### *The First Geniuses*

It took the turmoil of 1914-18, the thorough questioning of values, the Russian Revolution, and the European intellectual revolution for the camera to refine its place among man.

At that point, our discipline was invented by two geniuses. One, Robert Flaherty, was a geographer-explorer who was doing ethnography without knowing it. The other, Dziga Vertov, was a futurist poet who was doing sociology, equally without knowing it. The two never met, but both craved cinema "reality." And ethnographers and sociologists who were inventing their new disciplines in the very midst of these two incredible observers had no contact with either of them. Yet, it is to these two men that we owe everything that we are trying to do today.

For Flaherty, in 1920, filming the life of the Northern Eskimos meant filming a particular Eskimo—not filming things, but filming an individual. And the basic honesty of the endeavor meant showing that individual all the footage he had shot. When Flaherty built his developing lab at Hudson Bay and projected his images for Nanook, he had no idea that he was inventing, at that very instant, "participant observation" (a concept still used by ethnographers and sociologists 50 years later) and "feedback" (an idea with which we are just now clumsily experimenting).

If Flaherty and Nanook were able to tell the difficult story of the struggle of man against a thriftless but beneficial nature, it was because there was a third party with them. This small, temperamental, but faithful machine, with an infallible visual memory, let Nanook see his own images in proportion to their birth. It is this camera that Luc de Huesch so perfectly called the "participatory camera."

And undoubtedly, when Flaherty developed those rushes in his cabin, no one realized that he was condemning to death more than 90% of film documents that would follow. No one realized that they would have to wait some 40 years before someone would follow the still new example of the old master of 1921.

For Dziga Vertov, at the same period of time, it was a question of filming the revolution. It was no longer an issue of staging, or adventures, but of recording little patches of reality. Vertov the poet thus became Vertov the militant, and

perceiving the archaic structure of the newsreel film, invented the kinok, the "ciné-eye."

I am the ciné-eye, I am the mechanical eye, I am the machine that shows you the world as only a machine can see it. From now on, I will be liberated from immobility. I am in perpetual movement. I draw near to things, I move myself away from them, I enter into them, I travel toward the snout of a racing horse. I move through crowds at top speed, I precede soldiers on attack, I take off with airplanes, I flip over on my back, I fall down and stand back up as bodies fall down and stand back up.<sup>1</sup>

This pioneering visionary thus foresaw the era of cinéma-vérité. "Cinéma-vérité is a new type of art; the art of life itself. The ciné-eye includes: all shooting techniques, all moving pictures, all methods—without exception—which will allow us to reach *the truth*—the truth in movement" (Kinok Manifesto).

Vertov was talking about the "camera in its natural state"—not in its egotism but in its willingness to show people without makeup, to seize the moment. "It is not sufficient to put partial fragments of truth on the screen, as if they were scattered crumbs. These fragments must be elaborated into an organic collective, which, in turn, constitutes thematic truth" (Kinok Manifesto).

In these feverish declarations we find everything of today's cinema: all the problems of ethnographic film, of documentary TV film, of the "living cameras" we make use of today. And yet, no filmmaker in the world has been so poorly received, no seeker so inspired has been so unrecognized. We had to wait until the 1960's for directors and theoreticians to get back on the track of the Kinoks, those "ciné-eyes" who made "films which produced films."

In 1920, when Flaherty and Vertov were trying to resolve the same problems that today's filmmakers face, camera equipment and techniques were elementary, and the making of a film required more craft than industry. The camera used for *Nanook*, forerunner of the "eyemo"<sup>2</sup> had no motor, though it did already have a reflex viewer through coupled lenses. The camera of the "ciné-eyes" that brought us "Man with a Movie Camera" was also hand-cranked, and continually rested on a tripod. Vertov's "eye in movement" was only able to move about in an open topped car. Flaherty was alone, as cameraman, director, lab technician, editor, and projectionist. Vertov worked only through another cameraman, and had a small family crew, with his brother Michael shooting and his wife editing. Later on, Flaherty too had a family crew, with his brother David operating the second camera and his wife Frances as assistant.

And perhaps it was due to such simplicity and naïvete that these pioneers discovered the essential questions that we still ask ourselves today: Must one "stage" reality (the staging of "real life") as did Flaherty, or should one, like Vertov, film "without awareness" ("seizing improvised life")?

### *The Eclipse of the Cinema Industry*

In 1930, technical progress (the change from silent films to "talkies") transformed the cinema art and industry. No one asked anyone else what was happening, and nobody took the time to figure out what was really going on. But it was then that a white, cannibalistic cinema emerged. It was the time of exoticism, Tarzan, and white heroes among the wild savages. Making films then meant crews of ten technicians,

tons of camera and sound equipment, and responsibility for thousands of dollars. So it was obviously simpler to bring man to the studio and place him in front of the camera than to take the camera out to man. Johnny Weissmuller, the most famous king of the jungle, never left the sacred Hollywood forest; it was the African beasts and feathered Tubi's that were brought onto the camera set.

You had to be crazy, as some ethnographers apparently were, to take such forbidden tools to the field. And today, when one watches the first clumsy attempts of Marcel Griaule (*Au Pays du Dogon* and *Sous les Masques Noirs*, both shot in 1938) or Patrick O'Reilly (*Bougainville*, shot in 1934 and later retitled *Popoko, the Wild Island*), one can easily understand the discouraging results of their efforts. For after rather admirable camera documents were brought back, they were "made" into films with insensitive editing, Oriental music, and a newsreel style commentary more befitting of a sportscast. It was this betrayal that Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson managed to avoid at the same point in time (1936-38) with their "Character Formation" series (1. *Bathing Babies*, 2. *Childhood Rivalry in Bali and New Guinea*, 3. *First Days in the Life of a New Guinea Baby*). Here, thanks to American university financial aide, it was understood (before it was understood by other universities) that it was absurd to try to mix research and commercialism.

#### *The Post-War Technical Revolution: Lightweight Cinema*

New technical developments brought about by the war—the arrival of the 16mm format—allowed for the revival of ethnographic film. The American Army used lightweight cameras in the field; they were no longer 35mm monsters but precise and robust tools, born directly of amateur cinema. Thus at the close of the 1940's, young anthropologists, following Marcel Mauss' manual to the letter ("You will film all techniques"), brought the camera to man. And although some expeditions continued the dream of 35mm super-productions (such as the admirable *Pays des Pygmées*, brought back in 1947 along with the first authentic sound discs recorded in the Equatorial forest), 16mm would not be far behind in asserting itself.

From then on things happened quickly. In 1951 the first self-governing tape recorders appeared. And even though they had crank motors and weighed 70 pounds, they replaced a sound truck of several tons. Yet no one except a few anthropologists initiated themselves into the mania of these bizarre tools, which no professional in the film industry would even look at. And so, a few ethnographers simultaneously made themselves director, cameraman, sound recordist, editor, and also producer. Curiously, Luc de Heusch, Ivan Polunin, Henri Brandt, John Marshall, and I realized that as a by-product, we were inventing a new language. In the summer of 1955, at the Venice Festival, I was thus led to characterize ethnographic film in the following way for the journal, *Positif*:

What are these films, and by what weird name shall we distinguish them from other films? Do they actually exist? I still don't know, but I do know that there are those rare moments when the spectator can suddenly understand an unknown language without the gimmick of subtitles, moments where he can participate in strange ceremonies, move through a village, and

cross places he has never seen before but nonetheless recognizes perfectly well. Only the cinema can produce this miracle, but no particular aesthetic gives it the means to do so, and no special technique uniquely provokes it. Neither the learned counterpoint of a cut nor the use of stereophonic cinerama can cause such a wonder. Often this mysterious contact is established in the middle of the most banal film, in the savage mincemeat of a current events newsreel, or in the meanderings of amateur cinema. Perhaps it is the closeup of an African smile, a Mexican winking his eye for the camera, or a European gesture so common that nobody would imagine filming it; things like these force a bewildering view of reality on us. It is as if there were no cameraman, soundman, or lightmeter there; no longer that mass of technicians and accessories that make up the great ritual of classical cinema. But today's filmmakers prefer not to adventure on these dangerous paths. It is only masters, fools, or children who dare push these forbidden buttons . . .

But soon, the flashing development of TV gave professional status to our silly tools. And it was then, in working to satisfy our needs (lightweight, durable construction, quality), that manufacturers gave us their first marvelous portable silent sync cameras and automatic tape recorders. The first crews<sup>3</sup> to use the equipment were those of Ricky Leacock (*Primary* and *Indianapolis*) in the United States, and that of Edgar Morin, Michel Brault, and myself (*Chronique d'un Été*) in France.

#### ETHNOGRAPHIC CINEMA TODAY

Hence today we have extraordinary equipment at our disposal, and the number of ethnographic films has grown each year since 1960 (evidenced by the fact that more than 70 recent films were sent to the selection committee of the first Venezia Genti festival in 1972). Yet ethnographic film has not found its voice. Having solved all of its technical problems, it has yet failed to reinvent for us, as Flaherty and Vertov once did in 1920, the rules of a new film language which will permit the opening of frontiers between all civilizations. It is not my aim here to make a statement summarizing all experiments and trends, but simply to report on those which appear to me to be the most pertinent.

#### *Ethnographic Film and Commercial Cinema*

Even though the technical barriers no longer exist, it is rare that an ethnographic film finds commercial distribution. However, the majority of ethnographic films made in recent years share the same format as productions made for commercial release: credits, background music, sophisticated editing, narration addressed to the general public, proper duration, etc. For the most part, the result is a hybrid product that neither satisfies scientific rigor nor cinematic art. Of course, some major works or original films escape this inevitable trap (as ethnographers consider film like a book, and an ethnographic book is no different from an ordinary book).

The outcome is a notorious increase in the cost of these films, which makes even more annoying their almost total lack of distribution (except when the cinema market is open to sensational films like *Mondo Cane*). The solution to the problem is to study the film distribution networks. Only when universities, cultural agencies, and TV networks cease their need to make our documents conform to their other

products, and learn to accept the differences, will a new type of ethnographic film, with specific criteria, be able to develop.

*Filmmaker-Ethnographer  
or Filmmaker and Ethnographer Teams*

It is for similar reasons, and in order to make the most of technical possibilities that ethnographers have recently preferred not to film by themselves but to call on a crew of technicians. (Actually, it is sometimes the production crew, sent out by a TV company, which calls on the anthropologist.)

Personally, unless forced into it, I am violently opposed to crews. The reasons are many. The soundman must absolutely be able to understand the language of the people being recorded; it is thus indispensable that he be a member of the group being filmed, and, of course, be trained in all aspects of his work. Moreover, in today's manner of shooting sync sound direct cinema, the director can only be the cameraman. It is the ethnographer alone, to my mind, who really knows when, where, and how to film—in other words, to “direct.” Finally, and this is without a doubt the decisive factor, the ethnographer must spend a long time in the field before beginning to shoot. This period of reflection, apprenticeship, and mutual awareness might be quite long (Flaherty spent a year in the Solomons before rolling a foot of film), and is thus incompatible with the schedules and salaries of a crew of technicians.

But, of course, there are always a few exceptions: *The Hadza*, shot by the young filmmaker Sean Hudson in close collaboration with anthropologist James Woodburn; or *Emu Ritual at Ruguri* and the rest of director-filmmaker Roger Sandall's Australian series, made in conjunction with anthropologists; or *The Feast*, where Timothy Asch was completely integrated in Napoleon Chagnon's study of the Yanomamo.

Yet the Eskimo films of Asen Balikci, and Ian Dunlop's recent series on the New Guinea Baruya are for me examples of what should never happen again—the intrusion of a group of first rate technicians into a difficult field situation, even with the aid of an anthropologist. Every time a film is made there is a cultural disruption. But when the anthropologist-filmmaker is alone he cannot push what problems may arise onto his crew, and must assume responsibility himself. (We must remember that two whites in an African village are enough to constitute a solid foreign body, and hence to risk rejection.) And I've always wondered how that small group of Eskimos reacted to those crazy whites who made them clean out their camp of all that good canned food!

This ambiguity doesn't appear in Dunlop's earlier *Desert People* series, owing no doubt to the “piece of trail” shared by the filmmakers and the aboriginal family they met. But it naturally manifests itself in the New Guinea film. Here, at a most extraordinary moment at the end of the ceremony, the group responsible for the initiation asks their anthropologist friend to limit the film's distribution, so that it will not be shown inside New Guinea (*a posteriori* rejection). In cases like these, it is the awkwardness of the crew's presence which creates the obstacle to a “participating camera.”

This is why it appears to me essential that we teach students of ethnography film and sound recording skills. And even if their films are technically far inferior to those of

professionals, they will nevertheless have that irreplaceable quality of the real contact between those who film and those who are filmed.

*Handheld vs. Tripod Shooting;  
Zoom vs. Fixed Focal Lens*

After the war, when American TV was searching for films, (especially the “Adventure” series of Sol Lesser, and that of CBS) the idea of shooting without a tripod was almost prohibited by the desire for steadiness. Yet most of the 16mm war footage (including the extraordinary *Memphis Bell*, the adventures of a flying fortress and the first film blown up to 35mm) had been shot handheld. But when we took the example of the old pioneers and filmed without a tripod, it was principally due to economy of means, and to permit rapid movement between two cameras. Most of the time, however, the camera remained fixed, occasionally panning, and only exceptionally moving about (for example, in “crane” effects achieved by crouching, or when traveling in a car).

It took the audacity of a young crew from the Montreal Canadian Film Board to liberate the camera from its immobility. Koenig and Kroiter's *Corral* (1954) opened the way for the traveling shot, more definitively developed in the classic scene in *Bientôt Noël* (1959)<sup>4</sup> where the camera follows the bank guard's revolver. When Michel Brault came from Canada to Paris to shoot *Chronique d'un Été*, this technique was a revelation to all of us, and for the TV cameramen as well. The classic example of this style is now undoubtedly the shot in *Primary* where Leacock follows the entrance of John F. Kennedy. Since then (1960), camera manufacturers have made considerable efforts to improve the balance and manageability of their products. And today, all cameramen who shoot direct cinema know how to walk with their cameras, thus transforming them into “living cameras,” the “ciné-eyes” envisioned by Vertov.

This technique is particularly useful in ethnographic filming, for it allows the cameraman to adapt to the action as a function of the spatial layout. He is thus able to penetrate into the reality, rather than leaving it to unroll itself in front of the observer.

Yet some directors have continued the general use of the tripod, always for the sake of technical rigor. This is to my mind the major fault in the films of Roger Sandall and the last New Guinea film by Ian Dunlop. (Perhaps it is not coincidental that we're talking here of Australian directors, since the best tripods and pan heads are made in Sydney!) The physical immobility of a tripod fixed camera is thought to be compensated for by the wide use of variable focal length lenses (zoom lenses), which create an optical imitation of a dolly shot. But in fact, these lenses don't allow one to forget the unseen rigidity of the camera, because the zooming is always from a single point of view. Although these casual ballets may appear seductive, one must recognize that they only bring the camera and man together optically, because the camera always rests at a distance. Actually, this type of shooting more closely resembles a voyeur looking at something from a faraway perch, and zooming in for the details.

This involuntary arrogance on the part of the camera is not only resented *a posteriori* by the attentive viewer, but

also by the people who are filmed, because it is like an observation post.

For me then, the only way to film is to walk with the camera, taking it where it is most effective and improvising another type of ballet with it, trying to make it as alive as the people it is filming. I consider this dynamic improvisation to be a first synthesis of Vertov's "ciné-eye" and Flaherty's "participating camera." And I often compare it to the improvisation of the bullfighter in front of the bull. Here, as there, nothing is known in advance; the smoothness of a *faëna* is just like the harmony of a traveling shot that articulates perfectly with the movements of those being filmed. In both cases as well, it is a matter of training, mastering reflexes as would a gymnast. Thus, instead of using the zoom, the cameraman-director can really get into the subject. Leading or following a dancer, priest, or craftsman, he is no longer himself, but a mechanical eye accompanied by an electronic ear. It is this strange state of transformation that takes place in the filmmaker that I have called, analogously to possession phenomena, "ciné-trance."

### Editing

The director-cameraman who shoots direct cinema is his own first spectator in the viewfinder of the camera. All of his bodily improvisations (camera movement, framing, shot lengths) finally result in editing while shooting. Here again we are back to Vertov's idea: "The ciné-eye is: I *edit* when I choose my subject (from among millions of possible subjects). I *edit* when I observe (i.e., film) my subject (making a choice among millions of possible observations)" (A.B.C. of the Kinoks).

It is this aspect of fieldwork that marks the uniqueness of the ethnographic filmmaker: instead of elaborating and editing his notes after returning from the field, he must, under penalty of failure, make his synthesis at the exact moment of observation. In other words, he must create his cinematic report, bending it or stopping it, at the time of the event itself. There is no such thing here as writing cuts in advance, or fixing the order of sequences. Rather, it is a risky game where each shot is determined by the one preceding, and determines the one to follow. And, obviously, this type of shooting requires perfect coordination of the cameraman and soundman (who, I repeat, must perfectly understand the language of the group being filmed, and who plays an essential role in the adventure.) If this "ciné-eye-ear" team is well trained, all technical matters (e.g., focus, f-stops) are simply reduced to reflexes, and the two are free to spontaneously create. "Ciné-eye = ciné-I see (I see with the camera) + ciné-I write (I record with the camera on film) + ciné-I organize (I edit)" (A.B.C. of the Kinoks).

And when they are shooting, this team immediately knows, from the simple image in the viewfinder or the sound in the headphones, the quality of what they've recorded. If there is a problem they can stop and take another course; if things are all right they can continue, linking together the sentences of a story which creates itself simultaneously with the action. This is what I would call the "participating camera."

The second spectator is the editor. He must never participate in the shooting, but be the second "ciné-eye." Knowing nothing of the context, he can only see and hear

what has been recorded, that which has been intentionally brought back by the director. Editing, then, is a dialogue between the subjective author and the objective editor; it is a rough and difficult job, but the film depends on it. And here too there is no recipe, but "Association (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, bracketing) of similar film pieces. Uninterrupted permutation of bits of images until the right ones fall together in a rhythmic order where chains of meaning coincide with chains of pictures" (A.B.C. of the Kinoks).

A supplementary stage, not foreseen by Vertov, appears indispensable. Namely, the presentation of the rough cut, from head to tail, for the people who were filmed. For me, their participation is essential (more on that point later on).

### Narration, Subtitles, Music

It is not possible to decode two sound sources simultaneously, as one will always be heard to the detriment of the other. The ideal then, would be to make films only with original sync sound. Unfortunately, however, ethnographic films usually present foreign cultures where a language unknown to most viewers is spoken.

Narration, born of silent and lecture-type films, seemed the most simple solution. It is the direct discourse of the director, mediating between the viewer and himself. But this discourse, which should be subjective, is most often objective, and makes out to be a sort of scientific exposition, a manual providing the maximum amount of information possible. Thus instead of clarifying the images, the track simply obscures them, masking them until it finally substitutes itself completely for them. And so the film ceases to be a film and becomes a lecture; a demonstration based on visual designs rather than a demonstration actually made by the images themselves. Rare indeed are ethnographic films where the commentary is in direct counterpoint to the images. Two examples come to mind: one is Luis Buñuel's *Las Hurdes* ("Land without Bread"), where Pierre Unik's violently subjective text brings the necessary oral cruelty to match the unbearably cruel visuals. And the other is John Marshall's *The Hunters*, where the director leads us down the trail of the giraffes and their hunters with a very simple story. In doing so the film becomes as much the adventure of the filmmaker as that of the hunters themselves.

With the use of sync equipment, ethnographic films (like all direct cinema) became chattery, and narration attempted the impossible operation of dubbing a second language. More and more, actors were called upon to recite the narrations, always in the anxiety of approaching the norms of commercial cinema. With a few rare exceptions, the results were pitiable. Far from translating, transmitting, or reconciling, this type of discourse betrayed the communication, making it even more remote. And personally, after a bad experience with the American version of *La Chase au Lion à l'arc* ("The Lion Hunters"), I prefer to recite myself, even in bad English and with a bad accent, the texts of the foreign versions of my films (e.g., *Les Maitres Fous*).

It would be interesting to make a study of the style of narration in ethnographic films since the 1930's. One would see how they passed from baroque colonialism to adventurous exoticism to the dryness of scientific statement and, most recently, to ideological discourse in which the

filmmaker shares with others the revolt that he can no longer contain within himself. One would thus obtain a series of profiles, characteristic in time and space, of the investigators of our discipline; profiles that no book or lecture could better reveal.

Titling and subtitling appeared the most sensible way to escape the trap of narration. It was John Marshall, if I'm right, who was the first to use this process for his Peabody Museum "Kalahari" series. *The Pond*, a very simple sync film depicting the gossiping and verbal flirting of Bushmen at a waterhole, is a model of this genre. Nevertheless, one cannot overlook the problems involved. Besides mutilating the image, the most difficult problem is screen time, for as in commercial cinema, the subtitles cannot condense and cover everything that is said. I tried to use subtitles for a sync film on lion hunting (*Un Lion Nommé l'Américain*)<sup>5</sup> but it was impossible to satisfactorily transcribe the difficult translation of the text (praises to the arrow's poison recited at the moment the lion dies) within the given screen time. I thus made a version where I say the text (the hearing time is shorter) superimposed over the sync sound original. But in fact, the result here is also deceiving, for although the text takes on an esoteric and poetic value at the moment it is recited, it actually does not bring any complementary information into the film. So I have gone back to a version with neither narration nor subtitles, feeling that in the long run it would be miraculous indeed if in 20 minutes one could gain access to the complex knowledge and techniques that demand some ten years of apprenticeship from the hunters themselves. In this case the film can be no more than an open door to this science, those who want to know more can refer to a pamphlet, which, like the exemplary "ethnographic companion to films" (modular publications) should henceforth accompany all ethnographic films.

I should mention, to close my discussion of titles and subtitles, the excellent attempt made by Timothy Asch in *The Feast*. The film begins with a preamble of freeze frame condensations of the principal sequences, and indispensable explanations are given, *a priori*, on the soundtrack. The film is then titled in order to tell who is doing what, and discreetly subtitled. Of course, this process demystifies the film from the start, but to my mind it is the most original attempt to deal with the problem that has been made until now.

I will just say a few words about musical accompaniment. Original music was, and still is, the basic stuff of the sound track of most documentary films, as well as pre-sync sound ethnographic films. This was simply "how films were made." I learned the heresy of doing this early on (1953) when showing my film *Bataille sur le Grand Fleuve* to hippopotamus hunters in Niger among whom I shot it two years earlier. At the moment of the chase, I put a very moving hunting air, played on a one stringed bowed lute, on the soundtrack; I found this theme particularly well suited to the visuals. The result of the playback, however, was deplorable. The chief of the hunters demanded that I remove the music because the hunt must be absolutely silent. Since that adventure, I have paid much attention to the way music is used in my films.

Today I have the conviction that even in commercial cinema, the use of music follows nothing but an outdated

theatrical convention. Music envelops, puts us to sleep, helps bad cuts pass unnoticed, and gives an artificial rhythm to pictures that don't have, and never will have, any rhythm of their own. In short, music is the opium of the cinema. TV has now seized the mediocrity of the process as well, and I find the admirable Japanese ethnographic films *Papua New Life* and *Kula, Argonauts of the Pacific* to be spoiled by the musical sauce with which they are served. On the other hand, we should be aided by music which really supports an action, be it ritual, everyday, work rhythm, or dance. And although it is out of the scope of this paper, I must mention the importance that sync filming will have in the field of ethnomusicology.

Sound editing (background, speech, music) is undoubtedly as complex as picture editing. I believe that we still have enormous progress to make here in order to rid ourselves of prejudices we've come to via radio, prejudices which have led us to treat sound with more respect than image. I find many recent direct cinema films ruined by the incredible amount of attention paid to chattering, as if the oral statement were more important than the visual one. Where a director would never hesitate to cut on a movement, he wouldn't dare cut in the middle of a sentence or even a word, much less cut a musical theme before its final note. I believe that it won't be long before this archaic habit (TV is the current prime offender) will slowly disappear and the image will regain priority.

#### *The Ethnographic Film Public: Research and Distribution Films*

A final notion, which viewed in terms of intention is really the first point, is to my mind essential for ethnographic film today. Because in Africa, in the universities, at the cultural centers, the scientific research centers, or the cinémathèques, the first question asked after the projection of an ethnographic film is, "For whom, and why, have you made this film?"

For whom, and why, take the camera among mankind? My first response will always, strangely, be the same: "for me." Not because it is some type of drug whose habit must be regularly satisfied, but because I find that in certain places, close to certain people, the camera, and especially the sync camera, seems necessary. Of course it will always be possible to justify this type of filmmaking scientifically (creation of archives of changing or disappearing cultures), politically (sharing in the revolt against an intolerable situation), or aesthetically (discovery of the fragile mastery of a landscape, of a face, or of a movement that is irresistible). But in fact, what is there is that sudden intuition about the necessity to film, or conversely, the certainty that one should not film.

The frequenting of movie theaters, and the intempestuous use of audiovisual equipment, makes it clear that we are today's Vertovian kinoki, "ciné-eyes" who were formerly the "pen-hands" (Rimbaud) who could not resist writing: "I was there, so many things happened to me . . ." (La Fontaine). And if the "ciné-voyeur" of his own society will always be able to justify himself by this particular militarism, what reason can we, anthropologists, give when we pin our subjects up against the wall?



This question is obviously addressed to all anthropologists, but anthropological writing has never been contested the way anthropological film has. And that's where I get my second response to "for whom, and why?" Film is the only means I have to show someone else how I see him. For me, after the pleasure of the "ciné-trance" in shooting and editing, my first public is the other, those whom I've filmed.

The situation is clearly this: the anthropologist has at his disposal the only tool (the "participating camera") which offers him the extraordinary possibility of direct communication with the group he studies—the film he has made about them. Of course there are still some technical hangups here, and the projection of film in the field is still at an experimental stage. The development of the super-8 sync sound projector with a 12-volt battery will doubtless be serious progress in this area. But my experiences with a 16mm projector and a small portable 300-watt battery have been conclusive enough. The projection of my film *Sigui 1969* in the village of Bongo where it was shot brought considerable reaction from the Dogon (Bandiagara Cliffs, Mali) and the demand for more films; a "*Sigui*" series is now in progress.<sup>6</sup> And the projection of my film *Horendi* on the initiation of possession dancers in Niger also brought demands for more films. By studying this film on a moviescop with my informants I was able to gather more information in two weeks than I could get in three months of direct observation and interview. This type of *a posteriori* working is just the beginning of what is already a new type of relationship between the anthropologist and the group he studies, the first step in what some of us have labelled "shared anthropology."<sup>7</sup> Finally then, the observer has left the ivory tower; his camera, tape recorder, and projector have driven him, by a strange road of initiation, to the heart of knowledge itself. And for the first time, the work is not judged by a thesis committee but by the very people the anthropologist went out to observe.

This extraordinary technique of "feedback" (which I would translate as "audiovisual reciprocity")<sup>8</sup> has certainly not yet revealed all of its possibilities. But already, thanks to it, the anthropologist has ceased to be a sort of entomologist observing others as if they were insects (thus putting them down) and has become a stimulator of mutual awareness (hence dignity).

This type of totally participatory research, as idealistic as it may seem, appears to me to be the only morally and scientifically feasible anthropological attitude today. And it is to the development of its technical aspects (e.g., super-8 and video) that today's equipment manufacturers should dedicate maximum effort.

But at the same time it is obviously absurd to condemn ethnographic film to such a closed information circuit. That is why my third response to the question "for whom, and why" is "for everyone, for the largest viewing public possible." I believe that if the distribution of ethnographic film is, with rare exceptions, limited to university networks, cultural organizations, and scholarly societies, the fault is more our own than that of commercial cinema. The time has come for ethnographic films to become films.

I don't think that this is impossible, as long as a film's essential quality of being the unique statement of one or two

people is preserved. If exploration lectures and TV travelogues are a success, it is, I repeat, due to the fact that behind the clumsy images there is the presence of the person who shot them. If for reasons of science, or ideological shame, anthropological filmmakers insist on hiding behind their comfortable incognito, they will irrevocably castrate their films and doom them to an existence in archives, where they will be reserved only for specialists. The success of pocketbook editions of ethnographies once confined to a small scientific library network is an example which ethnographic film should follow.

And so now we find ourselves awaiting the appearance of true ethnographic films; films which "join scientific rigor and cinematographic language," a definition we gave them nearly 20 years ago. Meanwhile, at the Venezia Genti festival of 1972, the International Committee of Ethnographic and Sociological Films decided to create, with the help of UNESCO, a true network for the conservation, documentation, and distribution of "films of man." Why? Because we are people who believe that the world of tomorrow, the world we are in the process of building, cannot be viable without a regard for cultural differences; the other cannot be denied as his image transforms. For this it is necessary to be aware, and for that knowledge there is no better tool than ethnographic film. This is not just a pious vow, and a similar example comes to us from Japan, where a TV company, in an effort to broaden Japanese perspectives, has decided to broadcast an hour of ethnographic film each week for three years.

#### CONCLUSION: SHARED CINÉ-ANTHROPOLOGY

Now we are at the close of our story of the place of the camera among man, yesterday and today. And for the moment, the only conclusion that one can draw is that ethnographic film has not yet passed the experimental stage. Although anthropologists have this fabulous tool at their disposal, they still haven't figured out how to make it best serve their needs.

For the moment no "schools" of ethnographic film exist; there are only tendencies. Personally, I hope this marginal situation will prolong itself so that our young discipline can avoid sclerosis in an iron collar, or in sterile bureaucracy. It is good that there are differences in American, Canadian, Japanese, Brazilian, Australian, British, Dutch, and French ethnographic films. Within the universality of concepts in the scientific approach we maintain a multiplicity of orientations: if the "ciné-eyes" of all countries are ready to unite, it is not simply to have one point of view. Thus film in the human sciences is, in a certain respect, in the avant-garde of film research. And if one finds similar features in the diversity of recent films, such as the multiplication of shot-sequences (I have asked a manufacturer of lightweight cameras to make a 1000-foot magazine so that shooting can go for half an hour), it is because our experiences have led us to similar conclusions, and thus, have given birth to a new cinema language.

And tomorrow? . . . Tomorrow will be the time of color video portapacks, video editing, and of instant replay ("instant feedback"). Which is to say, the time of the joint dream of Vertov and Flaherty, of a "mechanical ciné-eye-

ear" and of a camera that can so totally "participate" that it will automatically pass into the hands of those who, until now, have always been in front of the lens. At that point, anthropologists will no longer control the monopoly on observation; their culture and they themselves will be observed and recorded. And it is in that way that ethnographic film will help us to "share" anthropology.

#### TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

<sup>1</sup>An exact reference for this text, and for other Vertov materials quoted later, is not given. French translations of Vertov can be found in *Cahiers du Cinéma* numbers 144 (June 1963), 146 (August 1963), and 220/221 (May-June 1970).

<sup>2</sup>The name of the early 35mm Bell & Howell hand-held camera which was the ethnographer's and newsman's staple camera the world over.

<sup>3</sup>The French is "équipe," literally "team"; Rouch and Morin were not "crew" in the English sense of the term. Rouch credits Michel Brault of the French Unit of the Canadian Film Board as the first cameraman to bring the new shooting techniques to France. Other sections of *Chronique* were shot by Roger Morillère, Raoul Coutard, and Jean-Jacques Tarbès.

<sup>4</sup>The English release of *Bientôt Noël* was titled *The Days Until Christmas*; the cameraman was Michel Brault.

<sup>5</sup>*Un Lion Nommé l'Américain* ("A Lion Named the American") was finished in 1971 and is a sequel to *La Chase au Lion à l'arc* ("The Lion Hunters"). It tells the story of the lion who escaped the hunters in the first film.

<sup>6</sup>Each year since 1967 Rouch has filmed the Sigui ceremonies of the Dogon. *Sigui 1969: Le Caverne du Bongo* and *Sigui 1971* are finished; the other films are being cut. A short description of the ceremonies and a summary of *Sigui 1969* can be found in Germaine Dieterlen's "Les cérémonies Soixantennaires du Sigui chez les Dogon" in *Africa*, 41:1-11, 1971.

<sup>7</sup>The French is "partagé" which I have translated as "shared"; the full sense of "partager" is actually "to share by dividing in equal halves." The point of view Rouch is speaking of is roughly similar to what is called "self-reflexive" anthropology in the States.

<sup>8</sup>Here Rouch uses the English word "feedback" in quotes and refers to the way he would translate the notion into French with "contredon audio-visuel."

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